Louisiana Black Bear
Ursus americanus luteolus

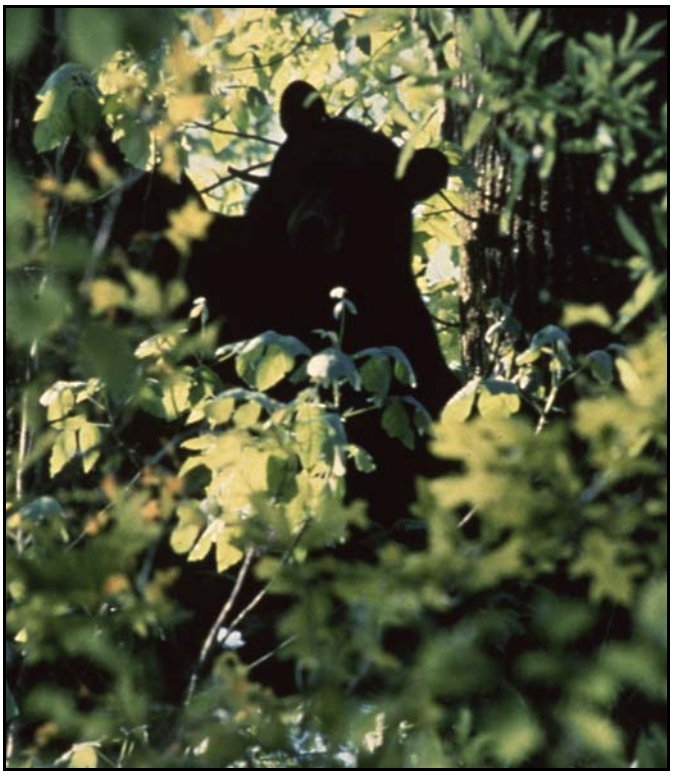

photo: Paul Davidson

Recovery and Management Programs

Forest and agricultural management practices that benefit the Louisiana black bear

Attitudes of landowners and the public are changing as people become more aware of the black bear's needs. With responsible planning and management, the black bear can coexist with many land uses, including forestry, and agriculture.

Landowners whose management goals include timber, wildlife, or agriculture can enhance their lands for the Louisiana black bear by incorporating the following guidelines recommended by the Black Bear Conservation Committee (BBCC):

- Maintain occupied bear habitat in some stage of timberland or vegetative cover by converting marginal agricultural lands to forestlands.

- Maintain a diverse, productive forest that provides preferred bear foods and cover.
- Use single-tree, group selection, patch clear-cuts or a combination to create uneven-age hardwood habitats. These practices promote the regeneration of key timber species such as oaks and stimulate the growth of herbaceous plants preferred by black bear.

- Preserve present and potential cavity trees as denning sites.

- Favor cypress stands, escape thickets, food sources, and travel corridors connecting forested areas.

- Consider the size, shape, and arrangement of harvest cuts, as well as the proximity and age of nearby harvested areas. This will promote diversity in hardwood and pine plantations.

- Where suitable, favor hard mast-producing species such as oaks and pecans.

- Thin natural hardwood stands when feasible, preferably every 5 to 15 years.

- Maintain wide, natural hardwood corridors, between separated hardwood plantation fields.

- Burn pine stands on a 3 to 5 year rotation.

- Limit construction of permanent all-weather roads into forested areas and avoid blocking, erecting gates, or closing roads when not in use.

- Select crops such as corn, sugarcane, or winter wheat, that provide both forage and cover for bears.

- Use all pesticides and herbicides in accordance with label guidelines, state and federal regulations.

Current projects

Repatriation of Red River Complex

Goals: Aid in the recovery of the Louisiana black bear by creating an additional population facilitate the movement of bears between existing

populations and eventual cross-breeding and increased gene flow between populations.

Agencies involved: Personnel from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Black Bear Conservation Committee, Louisiana State University, landowners, and many other interested individuals joined to participate in this project.

Methods: Most previous translocation projects have failed because bears left the area where they had been relocated to immediately after their release. Relocating adult females with cubs has been successful in other projects, therefore this study adopted the same strategy. Movements of mother black bears are restricted because of their cubs so females will remain on the release site while their cubs grow-up. During this time they become familiar with their surroundings and eventually establish a home range in the new area.

Bear with a radio-collar **photo: Paul Davidson**

Relocations and Management: Relocation efforts of Louisiana black bears to the Red River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) began in March of 2001 and continued in 2002. Relocated females in the Red River WMA in Concordia Parish are from the Tensas River Basin and coastal St. Mary and Iberia Parishes. Four adult females were moved in March 2001 and one in 2002. In 2003, five adult females with a total of 15 cubs were moved from the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Epps Plantation in Madison parish to the Lake Ophelia NWR in Avoyelles Parish. All individuals were radio-tagged and personnel from Louisiana State

University and USFWS monitor them through out the year to evaluate the success of the relocation s. This study is also providing knowledge about black bear ecology.

Future plans: Capture previously relocated bears that have dropped their collars and their cubs.

Controlling Nuisance Bears

As opportunistic feeders, black bears are constantly searching for food. Human garbage is rich in fat and easily acquired. Once bears learn that garbage is a reliable food source, they will return on a regular basis instead of spending time foraging. Unsecured pet food left in the open will also attract bears.

Bear-proof container **photo: Paul Davidson**

The number of calls to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries reporting bears in garbage has increased significantly in the last years. Bears attracted to garbage have already become a serious problem in certain areas of St. Mary Parish, LA. If bears are in the area, efforts should be made to secure all garbage containers and pet food, and to deposit edible wastes in containers that bears cannot gain access to (bear-proof garbage containers).

If you have problems with a nuisance bear, please contact

- ✓ **Maria Davidson, LDWF biologist,** at (225) 765-2385 or 1-800-442-2511 ext. 0 (24 hours)
- ✓ **Paul Davidson, BBCC Executive Director,** at (225) 763-5425